

TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN THE ARMENIAN

LANGUAGE

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In a letter from Hauteville House dated December 17, 1868, Victor Hugo wrote as follows:

J'ignore votre vieil idiome, mais je l'aime. J'y
sens l'Orient. J'y entrevois les siècles. J'y vois
rayonner la mystérieuse lueur du passé.¹

in reply to Krikor Tchilinguirian, who intended to dedicate to him the Armenian translation of Les Misérables. In this impression of the Armenian language, which he gained without knowing it or being expert at linguistics, the great French writer indicates, often with particular insistence, that the main, distinctive feature of the Armenian language is antiquity: "vieil idiome . . . J'y entrevois les siècles . . . la mystérieuse lueur du passé."

At first sight, a connoisseur of Armenian, even without great expertise in Indo-European comparative linguistics, could have quite a different impression, grasping the innovation, so characteristic of the Armenian language, which has so deeply differentiated it from all the others of the Indo-European family. For example, although it is quite easy to point out, even at first sight, the relationship among several cognates of "two" (Sanskrit dvā, dvā, Avestan dva, Old Church Slavonic dŭva, Greek duō, Latin duo, etc.), it is certainly much more difficult to see the relationship between these forms and the Armenian numeral erku. This characteristic innovation, so evident in the Armenian language, has been pointed out by the most skillful Armenists beginning with H. Hübschmann. In his famous work "Ueber die stellung des armenischen im kreise der indogermanischen sprachen," which opened a new era in Armenian linguistic studies, he pointed out:

Betrachtet man aber das armenische nach seinem
ganzen baue, so macht es den eindruck einer
sprache, die grosse veränderungen erlitten, von
dem alten materiale der stamm und wortbildenden

elemente viel verloren, das verlorene aber durch
neue flexionselemente ersetzt hat,

and afterwards he listed a whole series of "neubildungen" in Armenian.²

As a matter of fact, both of these different and contrasting impressions about the Armenian language can be explained and justified by a careful, although quick, analysis of the main phenomena marking Armenian. In the dynamics of the Armenian language, more than in other languages, the combination of two opposite tendencies, tradition and innovation, have resulted in the existence of numerous archaisms side by side with many radical changes.

Recently, Robert Godel, a disciple of F. de Saussure, a subtle interpreter of his theories, and a competent Armenian scholar, wrote:

Aujourd'hui, on demande à l'arménien des éléments utiles à cette reconstruction (scil. à la reconstruction de l'indo-européen): on y cherche des traits archaïques—et il y en a sans doute, à côté d'innovations radicales.³

To begin, it will be useful to mention some of the most interesting archaisms of Armenian, which will be much more meaningful when compared with the result of other Indo-European languages documented much earlier. First, the three primary vowels a/ e/ o/, which have merged to one or two vowels in most of the other Indo-European languages, are kept quite distinct in Armenian. This is an archaic feature of Armenian; the neighboring Iranian and Indian languages, although documented over a millenium before, look much more innovative because they have merged these vowels to the sole timbre a. This distinctive characteristic of the Armenian vowel system, in comparison with Indo-Iranian, was just one of the elements on which Hübschmann based his thesis that Armenian was not an Iranian dialect but an independent branch of the Indo-European family: "Das armenische dagegen spaltet das a ganz in der europäischen weise in a, e, o und unterscheidet sich schon dadurch scharf von den arischen verwandten."⁴ From these words one may infer that Hübschmann was still a prisoner of the then prevailing idea that a, e, o represented the Spaltung of a sole primary vowel a and that therefore the Indo-Iranian languages reflected the original situation better than the Armenian and European languages (especially Greek and Latin) which had changed. Not long after talking about the arische grundsprache, however, Hübschmann wrote more exactly: "Sie hatte a für

indog. \underline{a}^1 , \underline{a}^2 , \underline{a}^3 = gr. a, e, o"; therefore, "Wer diese ansicht theilt, muss sagen, dass die verschiedenen indogermanischen \underline{a} (\underline{a}^1 , \underline{a}^2 , \underline{a}^3 = \underline{a} , \underline{e} , \underline{o}) im Arischen in \underline{a} zusammengefallen sind."⁵

Almost at the same time, but independently, Hermann Collitz, Johannes Schmidt, and other linguists upset the traditional opinion, proving by means of the so-called "Palatalgesetz," that the three vowels \underline{a} , \underline{e} , \underline{o} antedated the sole Indo-Iranian vowel \underline{a} . In this case, therefore, Armenian (with Greek and Latin) was more conservative than Indo-Iranian.

Although the Armenian consonant system is marked by deep changes, it also contains some noteworthy archaisms. With special regard to the Lautverschiebung, the consonant system has posed problems for Armenian historical phonology which have increasingly drawn the attention of scholars in recent decades. An article of Gharibyan about the Armenian consonant system⁶ set off a lively and useful discussion which, from 1959 to 1962, developed mainly, but not solely, in the pages of the Soviet journal Voprosy Jazykoznanija. Although it gave rise to many contrasts and disagreements, this discussion had the merit of bringing up the whole problem of the Armenian consonant system again, especially in the light of the aspirated voiced stop series attested in some modern Armenian dialects. Before Gharibyan's article, the results of modern dialectology served as a starting point for a critical revision of the traditional pattern by which the Armenian consonant system had been codified. Émile Benveniste concluded a lucid essay on the Armenian consonant shift and modern dialects by postulating an aspirated voiced stop series in Classical Armenian: "Nous posons donc l'existence de sonores aspirées en arménien classique, où les phonèmes qu'on a toujours transcrits \underline{b} \underline{d} \underline{g} \underline{j} $\underline{\check{}}$ doivent recevoir la valeur de [bh], [dh], [gh], [jh], [ġh]."⁷

At the same time, but independently of Benveniste, Hans Vogt came substantially to the same conclusions, proposing an aspirated voiced pronunciation for the Classical Armenian stops, normally spelled as voiced, on the grounds of the modern dialects.⁸

We can go back still earlier, to the beginning of the century, when Holger Pedersen, pointing out that in the modern Western Armenian dialects the old voiced stops have become voiceless and the old voiceless ones voiced, wondered how that change was possible without the eventual confusion of the two series of stops. He concluded that the only solution was to suppose the Classical Armenian stops spelled as voiced, to be the unchanged Indo-

European voiced aspirated ones.⁹

Meillet liked this idea, which was later discussed by Pedersen in opening number of the journal Philologica.¹⁰ In the new Avant-propos of the reprinting of his Dialectes indo-européennes, Meillet declared, without any hesitation, that the Classical Armenian stops traditionally spelled as voiced were really voiced aspirated.¹¹

Unfortunately Meillet's position on this is not contained in the second edition of his Esquisse d'une grammaire comparée de l'Arménien classique (Vienna, 1936), yet Benveniste, as a disciple and successor of Meillet, had good grounds for pointing out: "C'est donc dans le texte cité de 1922 qu'il faudra voir l'opinion réfléchie de Meillet sur ce problème, et non dans la réimpression (1936) de l'Esquisse d'une grammaire comparée de l'arménien classique, où malheureusement la rédaction de 1903 a subsisté sans changement de fond."¹²

The reservations of some scholars about the presence of voiced aspirated series in Armenian are not beyond criticism, and the difficulties raised do not look insurmountable. I deem the clues right and the reasons for assuming the existence of aspirated voiced stops in Classical Armenian well-grounded. These stops represent the retention of the primary Indo-European voiced aspirated stops similar to those in modern Armenian dialects. Hence we can draw two important consequences:

- (1) This series of voiced aspirated stops, which is kept in Armenian, is a truly exceptional archaism paralleled only in Sanskrit. In the other Indo-European languages, even in those documented long before Armenian, these primary voiced aspirated stops have developed differently.
- (2) In Armenian, therefore, the consonant shift does not affect three series of stops but is limited to just two groups: Indo-European voiced and voiceless stops.

Besides the series of voiced aspirated stops, a series of voiceless aspirated stops is reconstructed for Indo-European; these, however, occur in only a few Indo-European languages, such as Indo-Iranian, Armenian, partially Greek, Latin, and Slavic. For this reason, these stops have been thought to be limited to a part of Indo-European territory and to have a more expressive than distinctive value. According to some, they should not be postulated for

Indo-European; rather, they may have arisen secondarily, in particular conditions, and only in some languages. Whether the voiceless aspirated stops have been inherited from the primary Indo-European consonant system, or whether they are secondary, expressive variants of the voiceless stops established in a limited part of the Indo-European linguistic field, it is interesting to point out that these voiceless aspirated stops are unchanged only in Sanskrit and in Armenian¹³ (excepting the velar one, which becomes a voiceless spirant in Armenian). In contrast to the voiceless aspirated stops of Sanskrit and Armenian and the Armenian voiceless velar spirant, Greek has either the voiceless aspirated or the voiceless unaspirated stop (especially the dental); Iranian generally has the voiceless spirant; Latin has the initial voiceless spirant and the medial voiceless stop; Osco-Umbrian always has the voiceless spirant; Slavic has the voiceless spirant only for the velar (for the other consonants it has the voiceless stop); while in all the other languages they are grouped together with the primary voiceless stops and follow the same change.

Hence we can point out some interesting facts:

- (1) In retaining of the series of voiceless aspirated stops, Armenian agrees perfectly with Sanskrit, which generally presents a very archaic consonant system.
- (2) The voiceless aspirated stops, like the primary voiced aspirated ones, were not involved in the Armenian consonant shift, which affected only the primary voiceless and voiced stops.
- (3) The voiceless aspirated stops are kept nearly the same in all modern Armenian dialects, unlike the voiced aspirated ones, which have changed differently in the modern Western Armenian dialects, owing to the second consonant shift.

Another archaic feature of the Armenian consonant system is of great interest for the open question of the primary Indo-European gutturals. V. Pisani, in his lectures during the 1945-46¹⁴ academic year and later in a lecture at the "Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese"¹⁵ on February 28, 1948, had already expounded a new theory of the guttural palatalization in Armenian. His new theory was later resumed and improved in a longer, documented work of 1950.¹⁶ By correcting the traditional doctrine, mainly put forth in

the second edition of Meillet's *Esquisse*,¹⁷ Pisani pointed out that only the primary labiovelars (with the exception of the voiced one) were palatalized in Armenian before *e, *i, besides *j (but in the final syllable, e dropped before palatalization), while the primary velars ignore such a palatalization except after s. This state of affairs is perfectly paralleled in Albanian, where H. Pedersen had already succeeded in proving that the primary labiovelars were palatalized, turning into sibilants, while the primary velars remained even before front vowels, turning into q (= kj) or gj only recently.¹⁸ In addition, Greek presents a similar pattern : the primary labiovelars were palatalized, turning into dentals, while the primary velars were exempt from such a palatalization. The similarity between Armenian and Greek as regards the palatalization of labiovelars becomes much clearer when we notice that in Greek, just as it does in Armenian,¹⁹ the primary voiced labiovelar does not undergo the palatalization process. We can, therefore, establish an interesting new Armenian-Greek-Albanian isogloss on the grounds of which we can draw some noteworthy conclusions as to the prehistory of Indo-European languages:

(1) Armenian, Greek, and Albanian show the clear, primary distinction of these two series of consonants by means of the palatalization of velars. This is, of course, much more important for Armenian and Albanian, where the two above-mentioned series of consonants joined in one prehistoric series of velar sounds, like in the other so-called satəm languages.

(2) The palatalization of labiovelars is a very ancient phenomenon which surely precedes their delabialization in the so-called satəm languages and their labialization in a so-called centum language such as Greek.

We can point out other interesting archaic features in Armenian, always referring to the prehistoric development of the primary labiovelars. Meillet considered Armenian awcanel 'to grease, oil, anoint,' awj (gen. awji) 'snake,' to be clearly related to Latin unguo, anguis, two cases in which Armenian w replaces Indo-European *n in a very enigmatic way.²⁰ Much more decisively, G. Bonfante has pointed out the anticipation of the labial feature of the following primary labiovelar in the w of Armenian awcanel,

awj; this is also well known and clear in such Greek words as kyklos, onyx, aukhēn (Aeolian amphēn), and so on.²¹ The case of Greek aukhēn, Aeolian amphēn stands out, first of all for the double form of the same word: The former presents the anticipation of the labial feature of the primary labiovelar instead of the nasal and the consequent delabialization after w, the latter with the nasal and ph from the primary labiovelar. Second, it is important because we can find the exact cognate of Greek aukhēn, with the same characteristics, in an Armenian word awjik'. Bonfante, however, was unaware of this correspondence. Today, at any rate, it is a matter of fact that the presence of w in the above-mentioned Armenian words has to be related to the labial feature of the following labiovelar. Either we agree with Bonfante as that the labial feature has arisen through anticipation following G. R. Solta,²² or with W. Winter that "the -w- in awj and awcanem [are] the result of the assimilation of -n- to the labial element of the following labiovelar."²³

The Armenian words awj (-i- stem) and awjik' exhibit a remarkable phenomenon: the primary voiced aspirated labiovelar is not palatalized before i (to give the expected ǰ or ž between vowels). It follows that, owing to the anticipated labial feature w, the original, conditioning labiovelar must have dissimilated losing its labialization itself before the labiovelar palatalization took place. This can be found—and confirmed, in a certain way—in Greek, where aukhēn, kyklos onyx prove, the labial anticipation has no doubt delabialized the labiovelars before their palatalization. The Mycenaean forms in Linear B which exhibit labiovelars already delabialized after u but not yet palatalized before e, i prove it clearly. These velars which developed from labiovelar delabialization after u obviously remain in Greek, while in Armenian they turn into sibilants or affricates after u, as did the primary velars. From what has been said so far, we can infer the following points on the prehistory of Armenian and Indo-European languages in general:

- (1) It is important that a trace of the labial feature of labiovelars can be found in a satəm language like Armenian; this is a clue to profound archaism. Therefore, it has been said: "parmi les langues satəm l'arménien est celle qui se rapproche la plus du groupe centum qui conserve l'élément labial des labiovélares, c'est-à-dire du grec, qui du point de vue de l' arménien est la

langue centum la plus proche."²⁴

(2) The anticipation of the labial feature of the primary labiovelars is another of the many phonetic isoglosses joining Armenian and Greek.

(3) The labiovelar delabialization after u (either original or arising from anticipation of the labial element of the labiovelar) is a very archaic phenomenon, both in Greek and Armenian. It surely precedes the palatalization of labiovelars, which itself has been proved to be ancient and to precede not only the unconditioned delabialization of labiovelars in every satəm language but also the labialization of labiovelars in Greek.²⁵

(4) The merging of the labiovelar with velar series is a relatively recent event in the prehistory of the so-called satəm languages.

Another important trace of the primary labiovelar in Armenian can be found in the following fact: the Indo-European syllabic liquids r, l after a primary labiovelar seem to issue in Armenian ur, ul instead of in ar, al, which is the regular in Armenian reflex after a primary velar and in every other case.²⁶ Interestingly, in Sanskrit ra issues in ūr after a primary labiovelar and labial; in ir in every other case.²⁷ Hence, we can draw another interesting phonetic isogloss, Armenian-Sanskrit. Clearly, in the prehistory of Armenian and Sanskrit, the labiovelar series remained distinct from the velar one for a rather long time. Even in the consonant system, Armenian presents an archaism in comparison with Sanskrit: the retention of the two distinct primary liquids r, l which generally merge to r in Sanskrit.

So far I have just pointed out some phenomena which, among others, are outstanding in the Armenian phonological system for their archaism. Even among the numerous innovations which have changed the primary morphological system deeply, some important archaic elements can be seen in Armenian.

Meillet has already noticed that, as a matter of fact, Armenian lost only one of the eight Indo-European cases; that is, the vocative. This occurred in spite of the disappearance of the last-syllable vowel, with a possible consequent adjustment and leveling of forms, and even though each kind of declension contains no more than three or four distinct endings

(though, in the personal pronouns there can be as many as six). This conservatism is one of the outstanding peculiarities of the history of Armenian. Among all the Indo-European languages, only Baltic and Slavic have kept such a complete declension from the date when Armenian is known. Greek, although archaic in other ways, had already lost three of the eight Indo-European cases before the historical age.²⁸ In the nominal inflection, which also has undergone perceptible transformations, some archaic elements survive; such as, isolated traces of the primary ablaut-series in nasal stems: Nom. Acc. matn "finger," Gen. Dat. Loc. matin, Inst. matamb, Nom. Pl. matunk'. In this declension, Armenian has maintained a more ancient state of affairs than Greek. While Greek has generalized the vowel o in every case of the declension of aphrōn (Gen. aphronos, Dat. aphroni), Armenian has kept the ancient vowel e in Gen. Dat. Loc. Sg. mianjin; cf. the contrast of Lithuanian Nom. akmūo "stone" and Gen. akmeñs, of Gothic Nom. haírto 'heart,' Gen. haírtins.²⁹ Other traces of the primary ablaut can also be found in the liquid-stem declension: Nom. Acc. hayr 'father,' Gen. Dat. Loc. hawr, and so on; in the declension of the numeral erek 'three': Nom. erek', Acc. eris (cf. Sanskrit tráyah, trīn; Gothic þreis, þrins).

The opposition of hur 'fire' and its derivative hnoc 'oven' refers to the ancient alternation r/n which occurs in Sanskrit yakṛt, yaknāḥ and on which Greek hēpar, hēpatos is based.

The traces of the ancient dual are very interesting. They are kept not only in the numeral erku 'two' but also in some nouns such as ač'-k' 'eyes,' which is exactly an ancient dual (cf. Greek osse; Old Church Slavonic oči, Lithuanian aki I. E. oq^ui), to which the plural ending -k' has been added, and similarly akanj'-k' 'ears' (with j after n), and cung-k' (or cunk-k') 'knees' (probably I. E. gongji).

The classical genitive of the noun arew 'sun' is arewu, but its archaic genitive areg survives in the compound aregakn, which is to be etymologically interpreted as 'source of the sun.'³⁰

Although the Armenian verbal inflections exhibit remarkable innovations, there are also some noteworthy archaisms; for instance, the preservation of the ancient root-aorists ed 'he has put,' et 'he has given,' ekn 'he has come,' perfectly parallel to Sanskrit ádāt, ádāt, Vedic ágan.

In spite of these and other archaisms, the Armenian phonological and morphological system looks well developed and deeply diversified from the

primary Indo-European one from the time of its oldest written documentation, owing to a whole series of innovations among which we have just described a few of particular interest.

One of the main reasons for the deep transformation of the Armenian phonological system was the shift of the primary free, tonal Indo-European stress into dynamic stress fixed on the primary penultimate syllable. The strong, centralizing action which this stress had on the word caused the fall of the last syllable vowel and the weakening, more or less emphasized, of some pretonic vowels. As for the chronology of this stress, it is evident that, at least, its effects on the vowel system of the pretonic syllables are still clearly discernable in the most ancient Middle-Iranian and Syriac loanwords in Armenian.³¹ Elsewhere I have also noted that these effects of the Armenian stress on the pretonic vowel are also valuable for a better knowledge of the different phases of the phonetic development in Iranian.³²

Another very innovative feature of the Armenian vowel system is the neutralization of the primary phonemic quantitative alternations which have issued into qualitative alternations only as regards some vowel timbres.

As for the consonant system, the Lautverschiebung is not the only phenomenon which produced notable changes in Armenian. It will suffice to record this fact alone; in the Indo-European reconstruction we set up many consonant clusters, which Armenian did away with leaving, in the historical age, nothing but the sequence of a semi-vowel or a liquid or a nasal or a sibilant plus a consonant, as the former of these two consonants was uttered with the preceding vowel.

Among the most outstanding morphological innovations, besides the many and various transformations of the nominal and verbal inflectional system, is the disappearance of grammatical gender in Armenian, which coincides singularly and remarkably with Southern Caucasian languages, which also do not mark the grammatical gender.

Aside from the few examples mentioned above, it is pertinent to note that, by the time when Armenian is first attested, the dual had already disappeared or was disappearing, not only in Armenian, but also in every other Indo-European language, with the exception of Baltic, Slavic, and Celtic.

The double tendency toward retention and innovation which can be noticed in phonology and morphology, that is, in the deepest structure of the language, can also be seen in the lexicon. Together with the retention of an

important part of the most archaic Indo-European terminology, Armenian exhibits an extraordinary propensity toward assimilating and harmonizing lexical elements of the most different linguistic and cultural traditions, both Indo-European and non-Indo-European. Put differently, in different ages and in different ways, the Armenian lexicon has always added to its wealth of words derived from substratum, adstratum, and superstratum languages, such as Hurrian, Iranian, Syriac, Greek, and Arabic and many more. We can, moreover, say that the complex history of this people and their cultural relationships with other peoples are well reflected in the stratification of the Armenian lexicon. As we all know, the Iranian contribution was particularly prominent and most decisive in the establishment of the Armenian lexicon. If the great phonological and morphological innovations notably changed the primary state of affairs, making the similarity between Armenian words and the ones of other Indo-European languages often quite difficult to grasp, the vast penetration of Iranian lexical elements caused the Armenian language to be considered an Iranian dialect for a long time. The Iranian loanwords in Armenian have usually kept the phonetic and semantic characteristics of the period when they came into Armenian, while their cognates in Iranian underwent considerable changes.³³ Just a few examples will be enough to illustrate the important phenomenon of the Iranian loanwords in Armenian: Armenian bazuk 'arm'³⁴ maintained the ancient Middle-Iranian form bāzūk better than Persian bāzū by keeping the final guttural, which disappeared in Persian, and the original pronunciation of a, which turned into a very open o in Persian. Armenian vat 'bad' kept the ancient Middle-Iranian form vat better than Persian bad with the primary unchanged v-, which turned into b- in Persian; the primary a turned into a very open e; and the primary -t turned into -d in Persian. Therefore, the perfect phonetic and semantic similarity between Persian bad and English bad is the final result of phonetic developments operating on two originally distinct words; the former with an ancient v-, the latter with an ancient b-, Middle-English badde). With the unchanged v-, and -č-, and with the primary pronunciation of a, Armenian vačar 'market,' has kept the ancient Middle-Iranian form vāčār better than Persian bazar. Armenian vard 'rose' has perfectly maintained the ancient Middle-Iranian form vard which has become gol in Persian through deep, radical changes, that is, a word with neither a vowel nor a consonant similar to those of Middle-Iranian.

If we pass from the phonetic side to the lexical one, we can point out

the interesting case of some Iranian words which have disappeared in Persian, but have been retained as loanwords in Armenian. Some Armenian words such as azd 'news, advice,' apastan 'shelter, refuge;' zēn-k' 'weapon' are some examples of this Persian Verlorenes Sprachgut³⁵ which have survived in Armenian. A far more interesting fact is that Armenian has kept Iranian words which are not attested in the whole Iranian linguistic tradition. According to phonetic reasoning, we can consider Armenian nirh a sure loanword of which the Iranian original is recorded in no Iranian linguistic phase, but it can be traced back to an ancient form *nidrā well attested in the parallel Indian tradition (cf. Vedic nidrā). It is also possible to recover an otherwise unknown Iranian word through Armenian with patuhan 'window,' which finds its matrix in a Middle-Iranian form *pātrān, from an older Iranian form *pātifrāna-, of which the latter element is a cognate of Sanskrit prāṇa- 'breath.' This allows us to establish the primary meaning of 'opening for the air' for the compound noun. Another Iranian word, without any documentation until the present day, is well attested by the Armenian loanword hraparak 'square,' supposing an ancient Iranian form *frapādaka- which also survived in the Syriac loanword hrpdq. In the same way, Armenian hrapoyr 'attraction, charm, allurements' presupposes an Iranian form *fra-pauda-, of which, however, no documentation has yet been found. Thus the Armenian linguistic area has maintained a part of the Iranian lexical inheritance of which we could not learn from any other source.

At the beginning, we said that two opposite tendencies, retention and innovation, coexist in Armenian and that they have somehow integrated and harmonized themselves. Now we see that the tendency to preserve lexical elements, subject in Iranian to many changes and even to disappearance in several cases, is itself born of the innovative tendency to receive lexical elements from other languages.

This phenomenon, closely fits one of the rules of areal linguistics (or linguistic geography) set by M. Bartoli: that of the "seriore" area, usually preserving the preceding phase.³⁶ In other words, when a language or the words of a language are taken somewhere else, this language or its words usually tend to remain more archaic than in the native land. That is why, for instance, American English and American Spanish have kept some archaisms which have been replaced by other forms in British English and Continental Spanish. Thus, American gotten (I've gotten bad/good reports) has been replaced by got as the past participle of to get in English.

While the tremendous contribution of foreign words to the establishment of the Armenian lexical inheritance have been thoroughly discussed, the studies of the presence of Armenian words in other languages (not only in Georgian and other neighboring languages, but in Western languages), as well, are rare and more isolated. A fact that is not of common knowledge but of great interest in this regard is the presence of an Armenian word in a text dating back to the origins of Italian literature. In the canzone "Amor non vole ch'io chlami" by Jacopo da Lentini, who is, perhaps, the oldest and greatest of the poets of the Sicilian school (thirteenth century), we read the word scolosmini. This word is of obscure origin and is not recorded in other Italian texts. A. Pagliaro, the careful and sensitive interpreter of Italian texts and a skillful Iranist, has proved, with profound insight and sharp subtlety, that the origin of this word must be found in Armenian xolozmik.³⁷ It is interesting to note that the few dictionaries which record this obsolete Armenian word give the vague meaning of 'smooth and dressed stone which could be employed as a whetstone or a base on which to pound other material.' Now, on the grounds of the elements drawn from the context where scolosmini occurs, as well as from other clues, Pagliaro has succeeded in pointing out "turquoise," the so-called stone from Khorasmia, as the primary referent of Armenian xolozmik. Thus, if on one hand the Armenian word xolosmini has shed light on an obscure, isolated, archaic Italian word handed-down as scolosmini,³⁸ on the other the Italian context of this word throws light on the primary meaning of an obsolete Armenian word. The oldest meaning of the word, archaic and changed in Armenian, turns out to be quite well preserved in the Italian "seriore" area, just as is predicted by the "seriore" area rule.

I hope that this quick outline is enough to give an idea of the main archaisms and innovations characterizing the Armenian language. At this point, the romantic idea that language reflects the speaking people's spirit strikes us in an alluring and evocative way. The Armenian people, whose roots are deeply embedded in the past, are profoundly anchored to their age-old customs, but at the same time they accept innovations, are open to renewal, and are particularly gifted with creativity. They are a people whose heart is bound to Masis and to Lakes Van and Sevan, but whose eyes are turned to the future.

NOTES

¹A. Tchobanian, Victor Hugo, Chateaubriand et Lamartine dans la littérature arménienne (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1935), 27.

²H. Hübschmann, "Ueber die stellung des armenischen im kreise der indogermanischen sprachen," KZ 23 (1875), 11.

³R. Godel, rev. of the KZ 89 (1975) to celebrate the centenary of H. Hübschmann's well-known article "Ueber die stellung des armenischen . . .," Kratylos 21 (1976), 104.

⁴H. Hübschmann, "Ueber die stellung des armenischen . . .," KZ 23 (1875), 31.

⁵Hübschmann, "Iranische Studien," KZ 24 (1879), 409.

⁶A. S. Garibjan (Ġaribyan), "Ob armjanskom konsonantizme," VJa (1959), 5.81-90.

⁷E. Benveniste, "Sur la phonétique et la syntaxe de l'arménien classique. I La mutation consonantique et les dialectes modernes," BSL 54 (1959), 53. In a final note (p. 56), he wants to fix the research chronology, observing that the problem of the Armenian consonant system had been the object of several lessons during an Indo-European dialectology course at the Collège de France since early 1958 and that in the Annuaire du Collège de France 58 (1958), 324, a summary of these lessons was already present: ". . . il a été montré à l'aide de travaux publiés sur la dialectologie moderne de l'arménien et sur les articulations du dialecte arménien oriental, que les sons de l'arménien classique transcrits par des sonores devaient être en réalité des sonores aspirées." Moreover, the same note let us know that at the end of Dec. 1958 Benveniste received the eighteenth volume of the Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap containing Hans Vogt's article "Les occlusives de l'arménien" (143-159), which came to the same conclusions pointed out by Benveniste.

⁸H. Vogt, "Les occlusives de l'arménien," Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap 18 (1958), 143-159.

⁹H. Pedersen, "Armenisch und die nachbarsprachen. 1 Vorbemerkungen über das armenische lautsystem," KZ 39 (1904-1906), 337.

¹⁰Pedersen, Philologica 1 (1921-22), 45-46.

¹¹A. Meillet, Les dialectes indo-européens (Paris: Champion, 1922), 13 of the Avant-propos.

¹²E. Benveniste, "Sur la phonétique et la syntaxe," BSL 54 (1959), 54-55.

¹³The arguments advanced by W. Winter in favor of a presumed fricative feature of the traditional aspirated voiceless stops "in the older period of Armenian" are weak and contested: cf. W. Winter, "Problems of Armenian Phonology, I: The Phonetic Value of Old Armenian p' t' k'," Lg 30 (1954), 197-201; "Problems of Armenian Phonology, II: The Representation of IE p t k k^w," Lg 31 (1955), pp. 4-8.

¹⁴V. Pisani, Lezioni di Armeno (Milano: Cisalpino, 1946), 31-32.

¹⁵V. Pisani, "La palatalizzazione armena," ASGIM 1 (1948), 1.15.

¹⁶V. Pisani, "Studi sulla fonetica dell'armeno. I Palatalizzazioni ed esiti di s + gutturale; esiti delle semivocali," RL 1 (1950), 165-193; now also idem, Mantissa (Brescia: Paideia, 1978), 255-286. See also the recent work by G. B. Jahukyan, "Die Bedeutung der ersten (indogermanischen) und der zweiten (inner-armenischen) Palatalisierung für die Konstituierung des armenischen Konsonanten-Systems," KZ 89 (1975), 31-42. F. H. H. Kortlandt, "A Note on the Armenian Palatalization," KZ 89 (1975), 43-45 is not very convincing.

¹⁷Antoine Meillet, Esquisse d'une grammaire comparée de l'arménien classique (2d ed.; Vienna: Mekhitarist, 1936), 30, *passim*.

¹⁸H. Pedersen, "Die gutturale im Albanesischen," KZ 36 (1900), 305-326.

¹⁹For this and other correspondences between Greek and Armenian see: G. Bonfante, "Les isoglosses greco-armeniennes," Mélanges linguistiques offerts à M. Holger Pedersen à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1937), 15-33.

²⁰A. Meillet, Esquisse, 37, cf. also p. 44 and p. 153, Armenian awcanem ("w traitement arménien de *n indo-eur. 2^e élém. de dipht. [?]," idem s. v. awj p. 154).

²¹Bonfante, "Les isoglosses gréco-arméniennes," 25.

²²G. R. Solta, "Palatalisierung und Labialisierung," IF 70 (1965), 277 n. 5.

²³W. Winter, "Problems of Armenian Phonology, III: Consonant Clusters," Lg 38 (1962), 258.

²⁴G. Bonfante, "Les isoglosses greco-armeniennes," 25-26.

²⁵It is astonishing that Pisani later asserted the contrary without any plausible reason (cf. V. Pisani, "Ueber eine paelignische Inschrift," Rheinisches Museum 95 (1952), 18; now also idem, Saggi di linguistica storica (Torino: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1959), 155) after upholding exactly that the delabialization of labiovelars after u preceded the palatalization of labiovelars before e, i (cf. V. Pisani, "Studi sulla fonetica dell'armeno," RL 1 (1950), 192).

²⁶V. Pisani, "Armenische Miszellen I. Spuren von Labiovelaren im Armenischen," Die Sprache (1966), 12.227-228 (now also idem, Mantissa [Brescia: Paideia, 1978], 336).

²⁷T. Burrow, "Skt gr̥-/gur- 'to welcome,'" BSOAS 20 (1957), 133 ff. (the article summarizes what O. Szemerényi had already stated during several lectures in Budapest and London); V. Pisani, "La ricostruzione dell'indeuropeo e del suo sistema fonetico," AGI 46 (1961), 22-23, adding other cases in which it is "possibile scorgere le tracce di una labiovelare in sanscrito: e precisamente in tre radici che in sanscrito cominciano con kṣv- corrispondente a un ps greco, ovè è lecito scorgere le continuazioni di un antico q^us-."

²⁸Meillet, Esquisse, 68-69; cf. also 97 "Jusqu'aujourd'hui les cas ont conservé en arménien leur principale valeur indo-européenne sans changement essentiel, et cette conservation est d'autant plus remarquable qu'on n'en retrouve l'équivalent nulle part en dehors du slave et du baltique."

²⁹A. Meillet, Esquisse, 79.

³⁰E. Benveniste, "Arménien Aregakn 'soleil' et la formation nominale en -akn," REArm 2 (1965), 9-10.

³¹G. Bolognesi, "Ricerche sulla fonetica armena. I Cronologia degli effetti dell'accento armeno sul vocalismo delle sillabe finali e su quello delle sillabe pretoniche," RL 3 (1954), 123-138.

³²G. Bolognesi, "Sul vocalismo degli imprestiti iranici in armeno," RL 2 (1951), 141-162.

³³G. Bolognesi, "Problemi di geografia lingüística relativi all' area iranica e armena," Actas del V Congreso Internacional de Estudios Lingüísticos del Mediterráneo (Madrid: Departamento de Geografía Lingüística C. S. I. C., 1977), 527-540.

³⁴Obviously I am referring to the eastern pronunciation of Armenian which is free from the transformations of the so-called Second Consonant shift that affected the western Modern Armenian dialects.

³⁵P. Horn, Grundriss der neupersischen Etymologie (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trubner, 1893), 261-302.

³⁶M. Bartoli, Introduzione alla neolinguistica (Geneva: Leo S. Olschki, 1925), 13-14, 69; Lineamenti di linguistica spaziale (Milano: Le lingue estere, 1943), 39-40, 50; Saggi di linguistica spaziale (Torino: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1945), 45-55.

³⁷A. Pagliaro, "Inviluti sono li scolosmini . . . (Giacomo da Lentini)," Nuovi saggi di critica semantica (Messina-Florence: D'Anna, 1956), 199-212.

³⁸". . . il gruppo iniziale sc della forma tramandata e un puro scambio grafico dovuto alla scissione del segno x che rendeva la velare spirante" (Ibid., 205).